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Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, the center of our joy, give us this day what we need to honor Your Name. Provide us with a steadfastness of purpose that will enable us to accomplish shared objectives. Strengthen us with the willingness to bear burdens and the courage to persevere. Impart us the wisdom to know what is right and the strength to do it. Empower us to forget our failures and to press toward the prize of becoming more like You.

Give our Senators a faith that will not shrink though pressed by many a foe. As they seek to do Your will, direct their paths. Grant us the vision and the power to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN G. ROBERTS, JR., TO BE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES—Resumed

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar No. 317, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of John G. Roberts, Jr., of Maryland, to be Chief Justice of the United States.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m. will be under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The acting majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Thank you, Mr. President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. President, shortly, we will resume consideration of John Roberts to be Chief Justice of the United States. Last night, we locked in a consent which provides for the final vote on confirmation. That vote will occur at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday.

Today, we have controlled time to allow Senators to come to the Chamber to give their statements on this extremely important nomination. As usual, we will recess from 12:30 until 2:15 for the weekly policy luncheons.

As mentioned last night, the Appropriations Committee is expected to report the Defense appropriations bill tomorrow. We expect the Senate to begin consideration of that bill on Thursday following the Roberts nomination.

I also remind my colleagues that we need to pass a continuing resolution by the close of business this week.

Finally, I once again alert all Members that we are working under a very compressed schedule. Next week, we will need to accommodate the Rosh Hashanah holiday, and therefore we will be stacking rollcall votes for midweek. Given this schedule, it is extremely important that we use our time wisely, both this week and obviously next week as well. Therefore, Members should anticipate busy sessions Thursday and Friday of this week. Friday

will be a working day as we make progress on the Defense appropriations bill. Senators should plan their schedules accordingly.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is very clear from Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Katrina that America is now learning how to be prepared for disasters. Many more positive things happened as a result of the threat of Hurricane Rita than happened just a few weeks before in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. We now know that it is not a question of pointing the finger of blame, but those of us in leadership in Washington need to get to the bottom of this—not so we can decide who was wrong in days gone by but, frankly, to make sure this doesn't happen again.

The American people do not want to know who wins the game of "gotcha" here; they want to know if America is ready for the next disaster. We were clearly not prepared for Hurricane Katrina. The scenes we all saw night and day on television of helpless victims in New Orleans and other communities remind us over and over again that the Federal Emergency Management Agency was not prepared for this challenge. We came to that realization when Mr. Brown was asked to leave FEMA. I believe that was the right decision.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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